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HOSPITALITY

by HENRY ZYLSTRA

. . . There was no room . . . in the inn.
— St. Luke

Come, Thou long expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us;
Let us find our rest in Thee.
Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.
— Charles Wesley

Among the older American hristmas classics, none is more charm-ng than Irving's inimitable *Sketch ook.* I was reading those five Christmas hapters in that book again a while ago, nd I found myself longing for the in-ratiating warmth and liberality in the anor houses of yesteryear. The thing iat comes to grand expression in Irv-ng's sketches is the old time Christmas irtue of *hospitality.* Said the old Squire f Bracebridge Hall: "I love to see this ay well kept by rich and poor; it is a reat thing to have one day in the year, t least, when you are sure of being wel-ome wherever you go, and of having, s it were, the world all thrown open you."

It is quite right that this virtue or race of hospitality should be so firmly ssociated for us with Christmas. The ssociation is a natural one. Two of the ings, certainly, that make for hospi-lity are the *guest* and the *gift.* Both f these were uniquely present at Christ-as. St. Benedict set it down as a rule f his order: "Every guest who comes the monastery shall be received as if were Christ Himself." Such, surely, the basis of the generosity and love e show *our* guests at Christmas, and such, rightly taken, is the foundation of all Christmas hospitality whatever.

Time was when the very word *guest* quickened the pulses and set up a high expectancy. One sees eager children, wistful at the window pane, awaiting the cutter's arrival. It may be that we have lost something of the keen edge of this expectation in the humdrum of our secularized lives. But time was when distances were long, travel was hard, and visits were a privilege. It was then that the host appreciated the guest, and the guest the host. And if we have lost the fine edge of expectation in our regimented holiday procedures, this may also be because not everything is in order with our charity. One of our American poets, Mr. Auden, at least, writes of clearing up the debris after a trying holiday:

. . . Now we must dismantle the tree
Putting the decorations back into their cardboard boxes —
Some have got broken — and carrying them back to the attic.
. . . There are enough
Left-overs to do, warmed-up, for the rest of the week —
Not that we have much appetite, having drunk such a lot,
Stayed up so late, attempted — quite unsuccessfully —
To love all our relatives, and in general
Grossly overestimated our powers.

We ought all, of course, in this Christmas season to be those children at the window impatiently asking again and again, "Is He coming?" And if ever there ought to have been an excitement of expectation it was when, in the fulness of time, prophecy yearned for fulfillment in the coming of the Divine guest. This was He who was announced in Eden as the One that should bruise the serpent's heel. The procession of the prophets marched towards Bethlehem from Balaam to Malachi with a mounting crescendo of urgency. The whole past was converging upon this present. This was the Branch, the Root, the Stem. Micah had been very specific: "Thou Bethlehem Ephrata, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth that is to be ruler of Israel." But there is no need here for calling upon the prophets for further witness: the words of

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Hospitality — Continued

Handel's *Messiah* are ringing in our ears. The point is clear: Our Lord ought to have been an *expected* guest.

But what now of the hospitality, the welcome, the entertainment He received? Think again of Washington Irving's words: Christmas the one day on which we can be sure of being welcome anywhere, and of having, as it were, the world all thrown open to us. The world, all the world, was most certainly our Lord's due. "All things are delivered to me," He said. "God," wrote the author of the Book of Hebrews, "hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son whom he hath appointed heir of all things." Long ago, in the Book of Genesis, the father Jacob had sent his son Joseph to his own, and they had said, "This is the heir: Let us kill him." Our Lord explained it in a parable: "Surely they will reverence the Son." But they did not accord Him this welcome. They put Him to death.

Joseph and Mary came to the inn, and they were waved away. Such was the Christmas Eve hospitality accorded the Heir of all things, Him to whom the world should have been all thrown open. Later He would give some hint of His natural right to the things that were refused Him, as when He sent His disciples for the colt on which to ride triumphantly into Jerusalem. If they were prevented from loosing the animal, those disciples were simply to say: "The Lord hath need of him." But this hour was not now come. There was no room at the inn.

We need not, at this late date, be berating the desk clerk in that old Palestinian hotel for his lack of respect. The natural man, of whom there is much in us all, does not easily recognize spiritual things. The poor man did not guess that eternity might have impinged upon time in the guestbook of his establishment. He did not know, as a poet would put it later, that twenty centuries of stony sleep were about to be vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle. He may have come with our best world's wisdom, and mumbled something about First come, first served.

First come, first served indeed. This was the Alpha, and He should have been served first. But there was no room. So it was that our earth received its honored guest. Afterwards, on occasion, it is true, He found hospitality in that friendly cottage in Bethany. But that was an oasis in the desert of general neglect. "Foxes," He said, "have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head." The expected guest was a *rejected* guest. He came to His own and His own received Him not.

Obviously, our own Christmas hospitality will be merely sentimental unless we begin by opening the homes of our hearts to this royal guest ourselves. Someone wrote a verse about that:

They said the Master is coming
To honor the town today;
And none can tell at whose house or home
The master will choose to stay.
And I thought while my heart beat wildly,
What if he should come to mine,
How would I strive to entertain,
And honour the guest Divine?

Joyce Kilmer put it this way:

Unlock your door this evening,
And let your gate swing wide;
Let him who asks for shelter,
Come speedily inside.
What if your yard be narrow,
What if your house be small:
There is a guest is coming
Will glorify it all.

Consider, finally, the words of our Lord: *Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in with him and sup with him, and he with me.* That is the penultimate word on hospitality. May we pray for the grace t receive Him into the homes of ou hearts. May we praise Him for th great grace of condescending to u entering into us, and lodging with u May we unbar the gates of our pride and kindle within the hearths of ou souls a love that can respond to Hi own. May He himself prepare withi us a table of offerings acceptable t Him. And may He dine with us no and evermore.

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takes this occasion to express the wish and prayer that all spiritual blessings in our Lord Jesus Christ may be yours in this hallowed season and in the days of this coming year

***It's Renewal Time! Take advantage of* THE REFORMED JOURNAL**

"TWO - for - THREE" PLAN

See page 16 for details

The Centrality of the Covenant of Grace

by ANTHONY A. HOEKEMA*

IT HAS often been said that the doctrine of the sovereignty of God is the fundamental principle of Calvinism. No one at all acquainted with Calvinism would, I am sure, care to dispute this assertion. Certainly the glory of Calvinism, or the Reformed faith, is its uncompromising insistence on God's sovereignty at every point. Over against Arminianism of every shade and hue, Roman Catholic theology, and all the various modernistic theologies, Calvinism maintains that salvation is due wholly, completely, and utterly to the sovereign grace of God, and not one iota to the meritorious works of man or to the autonomous or semi-autonomous decision of man.

Of course, when we speak of the sovereignty of God as the fundamental principle or highest point of Calvinism, we do not mean to assert this principle to the exclusion of the responsibility of man. We hold that the sovereignty of God includes and lays the foundation for the responsibility of man. If man were not a responsible being, then God's sovereignty would be reduced to that of a puppeteer over his puppets or of a mechanic over his tools. If God were not sovereign, man would not be truly responsible; man's highest responsibility lies precisely in his relation to His sovereign God. Divine sovereignty and human responsibility are but two aspects of one complex truth: you can only maintain the one if you also maintain the other. Both are taught in Scripture, and both must be consistently affirmed; what God has joined together man must not put asunder.

My purpose in this and a succeeding article or two will be to point out the centrality of the doctrine of the covenant of grace in Reformed theology, as also one of the high points of Calvinism. Without for a moment denying that the sovereignty of God is the fundamental principle of Calvinism, I should like to point out that in the doctrine of the covenant of grace, properly understood, we have precisely that emphasis on the sovereignty of God, but in addition an emphasis on the responsibility of man. It is, in fact, one of the beauties of the doctrine of the covenant that it gives equal emphasis to both of these aspects of Biblical truth. God in His sovereign grace has established His covenant of grace with man, beginning with the mother promise in Paradise, and continuing through the various dispensations of the covenant. He sovereignly bestows His mercies upon us in the way of that covenant, which is not arrived at by mutual compact between God and man, but by divine disposition. At the same time, however, God in this covenant comes to man with promises which man must believe and demands which man must fulfill. God gives man the strength wherewith to fulfill these demands, which he is utterly unable to do in his own power; but the fact that the covenant makes demands which must be fulfilled underscores the truth of human responsibility. If one were to take away from the covenant of grace the emphasis on covenant responsibility, there would be no covenant left. As our Form for Baptism clearly puts it, "in all covenants there are contained two parts." The covenant of grace is therefore, if I may put it that way, a point of intersection where both of these equally Scriptural principles meet: the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man.

The doctrine of the covenant of grace has always been recognized as one of the distinctive doctrines of the Reformed faith. Herman Bavinck, one of the greatest of Reformed theologians, puts it as strongly as this: "Apart from the doctrine of the covenant the Reformed confession and the Reformed theology cannot be understood on a single point" (*Roeping en Wedergeboorte*, pp. 92 f.). As regards its historic origin, it is quite significant that the doctrine of the covenants (works and grace) was not fully developed until the time of the Reformation. Though the seeds of the doctrine are found in earlier church fathers, it was the Reformers, particularly Zwingli and Calvin, who began to work out this doctrine and to assign it an integral place in the structure of Reformed theology. After Zwingli and Calvin, the doctrine of the covenant was given further development, not by Roman Catholic or Lutheran writers, but by Reformed theologians: Ursinus, Olevianus (the co-authors of the Heidelberg Catechism), Junius, Gomarus, Cloppenburg, Cocceius, Turretin, Heidegger, Kuyper, and Bavinck. We may safely say, therefore, that the doctrine of the covenant was a uniquely Reformed contribution to theology.

* * *

IN REAFFIRMING the centrality of the covenant of grace in Reformed theology, let me begin by saying that that doctrine is the very heart of Scripture. That this is so is being recognized increasingly by Biblical scholars today. Walther Eichrodt sees in the concept of the covenant the very essence of the Old Testament description of Israel's religion; he even names the various chapters in the first volume of his *Theologie des Alten Testaments* (1948) in terms of various aspects of this covenant. Ludwig Kohler similarly affirms that the basic relationship between Yahweh and his people, as pictured in the Old Testament, takes the form of a covenant. Johannes Pedersen expresses himself to the same effect. The conception of the covenant common to all these critical scholars is, needless to say, poles removed from the conception common to historic Reformed theology. But the very fact that they recognize the centrality of the covenant idea in the Old Testament Scriptures confirms the thesis that the doctrine of the covenant is, indeed, a basic Biblical doctrine. And the fact that the concept of the covenant is being increasingly recognized in Biblical studies today underscores the importance of a proper understanding of the covenant doctrine by Reformed scholars, Biblical and otherwise. For these critical scholars reduce the covenant idea to a purely human construction of the relation between Israel and God; in them the covenant is no longer God's revelation to man but simply man's way of thinking about God. This construction, needless to say, is fatal to a proper understanding of the covenant.

Leaving aside these critical reconstructions of the Bible, let us go on to observe that, from the standpoint of historic Reformed orthodoxy, the doc-

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Centrality of Covenant of Grace — Continued

trine of the covenant of grace is, indeed, the beating heart of Scripture. The Bible is pre-eminently a covenantal revelation. The very names of its two main divisions, Old and New Testaments or Covenants, suggest this thought. The covenant of grace runs through the entire Bible, from beginning to end. The covenant promise, that God will be a God to His people, links together Genesis 3:15 with Revelation 21:3. The obligations of the covenant of grace are placed before Adam immediately after the fall, and before all believers after him: the covenant Mediator is prefigured in the Old and depicted in the New Testament; covenantal fellowship with God is the essence of both Old Testament and New Testament religion. In fact, it is particularly the covenant idea which unites Old and New Testament, thus revealing their fundamental unity. Of the three terms commonly used in Scripture to indicate the people of God as a group, *church* is restricted entirely to the New Testament, *kingdom* is frequently found in the Old Testament but not with the same meaning throughout nor generally in the same sense as the New Testament *kingdom of God* or *kingdom of heaven*, whereas only *covenant* is used throughout the Bible in practically the same sense.

This fundamental unity of Old and New Testament, revealed particularly in the unity of the covenant of grace through its various dispensations, is of crucial importance today over against theological movements like Dispensationalism, which posits a dualistic antagonism between Old and New Testament, as between the eras of law and grace. It is extremely significant in this connection to note that Irenaeus, an anti-Gnostic father of the second century, combated a similar dualism between Old and New Testament as taught by the Gnostics, by asserting that the same Lord Jesus Christ had produced both covenants, that of the Old Testament and that of the New (*Against Heresies*, IV, 9, 1). Already this clear-thinking church father, in whose teachings the seeds of the covenant doctrine can be found, saw in the unity of the covenant of grace the best defense against all dualistic fragmentation of Scripture. And we do well to follow his example.

* * *

We go on to some theological considerations. Herman Bavinck suggests three basic reasons why the covenant of grace is the very essence of true religion: (1) *Because God is the Creator and man is the creature.* Because of the infinite distance between God and man, there can be true fellowship between them only if God makes a covenant with man. No other religion has understood this; all other religions either identify God pantheistically with the creature, or exalt Him deistically far above the creature. Only the religion of the Scriptures maintains both God's greatness and God's condescension — in the doctrine of the covenant. (2) *Because, strictly speaking, no creature has any rights over against God.* Yet, according to the Scriptures, man may ask God for blessings, including salvation and all it entails. This is only possible because God in condescending grace is pleased to bestow certain rights on His rational creatures. He does this when He makes a covenant with them. (3) *Because man is a rational, moral creature.* God does not therefore deal with man as if he were a stick or a block of wood; He works with man as with a rational, moral being. He would have man serve Him freely, willingly, lovingly. Hence religion in Scripture assumes from the very beginning the form of a covenant, wherein God appears not as forcing man but as warning and inviting man; and wherein man serves God not through force or violence but willingly, moved to reciprocal love by the prior love of God (*Gereformeerde Dogmatiek*, II, 612-614). It is obvious from the above that the covenant of grace is much more than just a prop to buttress infant baptism or a good argument for Christian schools. It is a doctrine integral to our Reformed interpretation of Scripture!

In order to see more clearly the centrality of the covenant doctrine, let us go on to note its relationship to our understanding of God and man. As far as the doctrine of *God* is concerned, we have already noted that the doctrine of the covenant does full justice to both the sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man. As regards the doctrine of the Trinity, the Scriptures teach us that there was a covenant between the three Persons of the Trinity preparatory for and basic to the historical manifestation of the covenant of grace. This covenant of redemption, however, also called the *pactum salutis*, is not only the source of the covenant of grace: it is also its pattern and archetype. The doctrine of the *pactum salutis* helps us to understand the life of the three Persons of the Trinity as a covenant life in its fullest sense. In that *pactum* the highest freedom and the most perfect agreement unite. Hence we must recognize in the inter-Trinitarian covenant the perfect pattern for the covenant into which God enters with man. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

* * *

What has just been said also implies that, apart from the doctrine of the covenant, we cannot properly understand *man*. Man, having been created in the image of God, was created for covenantal living and covenantal fellowship, both with God and with his fellowmen. The very creation of Eve, for example, reveals that man was destined for covenantal fellowship: "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Gen. 2:18). Man first lived in perfect fellowship with God and his human partner; we express this primeval fellowship theologically by means of the doctrine of the covenant of works. When man broke this covenant by sinning against God's command, he passed from the *status integritatis* to the *status corruptionis*. Man's present hope and true destiny, however, as a member of the fallen race, lies precisely in the covenant of grace, through which man can again be restored to the true fellowship with God and other which he lost by the fall.

The doctrine of the covenants (works and grace) does full justice to the organic unity and interrelatedness of mankind. On this point the Christian view of man is poles removed from the Greek view of man. The Greeks (Plato, Aristotle) taught that man was essentially an abstract, atomistic being, who stood in no real or vital relationship to his fellow-men. In Plato souls pre-existed, then entered into human bodies because they "lost their wings"; at death the body is dissolved again into dust but the soul lives on; there is, for Plato, no resurrection of the body. Man's biological relation to other men

therefore, to the Greeks, something ccidental to his real nature, not es-ntial to his being. The Reformed hristian, however, looks upon man as *sentially* related to every other man rough ties of blood, and upon the man race as an organism. It is pre-sely this unified organism which fell Adam, and it is precisely out of this nified organism that God saves His ople in Christ. The interrelatedness man to his fellow-men in Adam, ex-essed in the doctrine of the covenant works, is basic to the interrelated-ss of believers to each other in Christ, pressed in the doctrine of the cove-ant of grace. As we fell in Adam, so e are saved in Christ. We are saved an organism, not just as so many parate individuals; we are saved as new race, of which Christ is the ead. Herein lies precisely the differ-ce between men and angels: that men nstitute a race bound together by es of blood, whereas angels do not. his very organic unity of the human ce is basic to our salvation: "For erily not of angels doth he take hold, t he taketh hold of the seed of Abra-am" (Heb. 2:16). Christ by His in-rnation laid hold of our race, made imself one with our race, so that He uld save His people from their sins.

* * *

ACCEPTANCE of the doctrine of e covenants (works and grace) is herefore essential for the proper un-erstanding of man. We may take arl Barth as an example of what hap-ens to our anthropology when we fail take the covenant doctrine seriously. arth denies the existence of the cove-ant of works; though he frequently efers to the *Bund* God made with man, e nowhere speaks of a covenant made ith man before the fall. He denies e historicity of the fall. The fall as not an historical event by means f which man fell from the *status in-egritatis* into the *status corruptionis.* n fact, in Barth's theology a covenant f works is impossible. For, when peaking about the fall, Barth says, Man in himself and as such, con-ronted by Satan and his kingdom, has n his created freedom not the power o reject what God in His divine free-lom rejects, and thus, despite the emptation, to maintain the excellence f his creaion and of his destiny as he image of God. The chosen man, esus, does this (Matt. 4:1-11). But nan in himself and as such will al-ways do what according to Genesis 3 Adam did" (*Kirchliche Dogmatik*, II, 2, 131; translation mine).

Barth's position here would make the fall inevitable, and a covenant of works impossible. For how could God covenant with man, promising him life on condition of perfect obedience, if man was incapable of rendering such obedience? If man "has in his created freedom not the power to reject" sin? If there was no *status integritatis* from which man fell? Actually, on the basis of this interpretation there really was no fall. For, according to Barth, man always was what he is now; he is no different today than Adam was before the fall; "there was no previous time in which man was not yet a transgressor and was still innocent" (K. D. IV, 1, 551). But if you deny the fall as an historical change in man's condition, do you still have a truly Scriptural anthropology? If you deny the historical fall, can you still maintain man's responsibility for sin? If you deny the historical fall, do you not throw away the only explanation of the entrance of sin into the world which safeguards against making God the author of evil?

As far as the covenant of grace is concerned, Barth claims to hold to it; refers to it quite frequently, in fact. But when you examine what Barth means by the covenant of grace, you arrive at a conception quite different from that held by historic Reformed theology. For Barth the covenant of grace has been established, not just with believers and their seed, but with "man, mankind, and the entire remaining cosmos" (K. D. II, 2, 6). "For both (the elect and the reprobate) attest the covenant, which embraces them both" (K. D. II, 2, 389). In Barth the covenant is identified with God's *Gnadenwahl*, His gracious choice of man in Jesus Christ. Barth's covenant doctrine is therefore intimately associated with his teachings on divine election. But when we ask Barth who are the elect, we get an answer like this: "The election of man is his election in Jesus Christ. . . . Included in his election there is also an 'other' election: the election of the many (from whom no one is excluded)" (K. D. II, 2, 215). If no one is to be excluded from divine election, then, of course, no one can be excluded from God's covenant. So then, in Barth, the covenant of grace embraces everybody. But it ought to be obvious that, if you hold to a covenant which includes everybody, you have robbed the concept of the covenant of grace of its historic meaning and made it to mean something quite different from what the Reformers meant by it.

And now it is extremely significant in this connection to note that Barth, in 1943, in a lecture entitled *Die Kirchliche Lehre von der Taufe*, completely repudiated infant baptism! He was taken to task on this score by a number of theologians, including his colleague at Basel, Oscar Cullmann (*Baptism in the New Testament*) and our own G. C. Berkouwer (*Karl Barth en de Kinderdoop*, 1947). Both of these men attack Barth's repudiation of infant baptism by appealing to the unity and continuity of the covenant of grace in Old and New Testament dispensations. Berkouwer applies to Barth Calvin's polemics against the Ana-Baptists of his day, who similarly failed to understand the covenant of grace. Despite Barth's claim to hold to the covenant of grace, therefore, his denial of infant baptism reveals a complete misunderstanding of the Scriptural teaching on the covenant of grace. His rejection of infant baptism is, in fact, a virtual repudiation of the doctrine of the covenant.

So you have in Barth no covenant of works at all, and a covenant of grace which has been robbed of its historic meaning, and which has not even sufficient strength to prevent the rejection of infant baptism. Since the Barthian theology is, without a doubt, the most widely influential contemporary theology, we do well as Reformed Christians to keep our fences mended as far as the doctrine of the covenant is concerned. For in the years to come the battle against the Barthian theology will have to be fought along the line of the covenant doctrine as well as along other lines (view of Scripture, predestination, creation, general revelation, and so on).

* * *

WE HAVE NOTED the centrality of the doctrine of the covenant of grace from the point of view of the history of doctrine, God's revelation in Scripture, and the indispensability of this doctrine for the proper understanding of God and man. In a subsequent article I hope to continue exploring the interrelatedness of the doctrine of the covenant with other aspects of Reformed theology.

Gerrit Klaas Hemkes

by J. G. VANDEN BOSCH

GERRIT KLAAS HEMKES was born May 6, 1838, at Hallum, a village in the province of Friesland, Holland. His father pursued the craft of a linen weaver and was a man of only moderate means. Gerrit's boyhood was like that of a normal boy, nothing human or boy-like being alien to him. He was fond of drawing but had not the money with which to buy the necessary paper and pencils. His resourceful mind thought of a scheme. If only he could have the job of conveying the mail from the packet boat to the post office, he would be able to gratify his desires. So one dark evening he, wrapped in a white sheet, suddenly shot from behind a tree into the path of the post boy, who, thoroughly frightened, ran at top speed for safety from the dreadful apparition.

This boy, full of tricks, enjoyed the privileges of being reared in a Christian home. When he was still in his teens, he was seriously concerned about his personal relation to God. For him sin was not a meaningless term, but a grim reality that renders a man guilty in the sight of heaven. For a long time he feared that he had committed the very worst of sins, that against the Holy Ghost. So severe was his struggle with this obsession that he dreaded attending church services. One time a sermon on Peter's denial of his Lord had made him extremely uncomfortable. Peter had cursed himself, he thought, but he had cursed the rule of God, which was far worse. It was in a dream that he finally was delivered from his agony. He imagined himself to be in a valley surrounded by hills of guilt, among which he saw the mountain of his sin against the Holy Ghost and saw it vanish forever. He awoke, assured of forgiveness; inexpressible joy and peace filled his soul.

Frequently fiction has a habit of portraying clergymen as stock characters, as objects of ridicule or of pathos, unworthy of being held up as examples to be imitated. There were at least two ministers of the gospel in the life of young Hemkes that totally discredit such misrepresentation. One of these was Rev. J. R. Kreulen, his pastor, who, discerning in the youth promising talents, stirred up the gift within him, urged him to study for the ministry, secured means for his support, and gave him private lessons for two years. The other was Rev. K. J. Pieters, pastor of the church at Franeker, whose preaching he attended while he was a student in the gymnasium at this place, supported by the student fund of the Friesland churches. Rev. Pieters clearly was a man of power in his pulpit. Again and again did Rev. Hemkes in later life express his warm appreciation of what Rev. Pieters had meant for him during his gymnasium days. In one place he speaks of the Franeker preacher as having been his unforgettable teacher, whose sermons had never wearied or bored him. In another he tells us that the memory of Pieters, the pulpiteer, lay deeply buried in his soul, paying glowing tribute particularly to the man's manner of preaching.

* * *

IN DUE TIME Gerrit Hemkes finished his studies at the gymnasium and at graduation delivered an oration in Latin on the subject *Oedippus Coloneus*. In 1863 he enrolled as a student in theology at Kampen and two years later, together with G. E. Boer, J. Kremer — from 1877 to 1879 pastor of Spring Street church — H. Van Hoogen, and H. Vissink — later called to be the first professor of the Theological School — he was declared a candidate for the sacred ministry. Hemkes jocosely characterized this period as the "Brakeliaansche Studie Tijd" presumably because Brakel's *Redelijke Godsdienst* was an important textbook used at Kampen for the study of theology.

Candidate Hemkes accepted the call extended him by the church at Leek in the province of Groningen. In his examination by classis prior to his ordination to the sacred office he revealed himself as a conscientious student. Among those who examined him was Rev. D. K. Wielenga, also formerly a private student of Rev. Kreulen and later a professor at Kampen, who had distinguished himself at the classical examination the year before. Having asked only three questions, Wielenga turned to the president and praised the young man for the thoroughness with which he had prepared himself and for the intellectual ability his answers displayed. A young man by the name of Jacob Noordewier was also present.

Rev. G. K. Hemkes served four churches: Leek and Musselkanaal, both in Holland; Bunde in Ostfriesland Germany; and Vriesland, in America In the church at Leek, where he was ordained, he labored eight years with joy and much blessing and used the printed as well as the spoken word to promote the cause of Christ. In his charge he had to contend with the evil of alcohol among his members, and feeling ill at ease, he prayed for a call and left within a year. At Bunde among the Ostfriesians, he again felt at home, and besides doing his pastoral duties he tutored two young men for the ministry, of whom one died before completing his work and of whom the other was W. R. Smidt, later pastor of several churches in this country, Franklin Street Church in Grand Rapids being the one served longest. Among the fellow Friesians in his new world charge he was appreciated and happy. When he arrived in Vriesland, who should be one of the first to greet him but Rev. J. Noordewier, the young man who had witnessed his classical examination?

* * * *

THE YEAR 1883 marked a turning point in the career of this pastor of quiet rural church. The synod of the previous year, imbued with the idea of expansion and improving the instruction given, decided to appoint a second professor. Since Gerhardus Vos declined because he wished to continue his studies, and Rev. A. Brummelkamp Jr., of Groningen and Rev. H. Beuker of Emlichheim did not see their way clear to accept, curatorium, authorized to make temporary arrangements, asked Rev. Hemkes to be assistant professor for one year, a commendable choice, for, as we have learned, he was a graduate of a gymnasium and was not without experience in training others for the ministry. He accepted; and his consistory acquiesced, provided ministers of the Holland and Grand Rapids area fill the Vriesland pulpit on Sunday.

The burden to which Rev. Hemkes had put his shoulder was indeed a heavy one. He had a variety of subjects assigned to him, both literary and theological, offering allurements, in deed, in many areas of knowledge but the beckonings from unexplored re

mainders were sufficient to bewilder any ambitious scholar or to fill him with a sense of despair. The twenty-four teaching periods kept him more than busy from Monday noon to Saturday noon. The writer vividly recalls hearing Professor Hemkes speak at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the founding of the Theological School in 1901 on the assigned theme, "Our Second Docent." Most entertainingly he reminisced even of his hardships. Sometimes when the clay road from the parsonage to the railroad station, especially in spring, was impassable for a vehicle, the three miles had to be traveled *a pedibus apostolorum*, afoot, and progress was slow. Arriving one morning at the station, he learned that the train, due at 6:30 a.m., had already passed. With wry humor he remarked that this was in accordance with the agreement made with the conductor that, if he were not present, the train should proceed on schedule time. He then boarded a freight and did not reach Grand Rapids till noon.

The assistant professor had given satisfaction and the Synod of 1884 confirmed the choice of curatorium by making it a permanent one. This decision must have pleased the students, for they had petitioned that body to make Rev. Hemkes a regular professor. Church history was to be his major field, but several other branches were assigned to him. Thus it came about that the minister of a peaceful rural charge was promoted to a professorship in the Theological School which the churches loved so well and tried so hard to make a good one. For him the change was an agreeable one, as he frankly owned in his reminiscences given at the Quarter Centennial in 1901. He had often prayed to be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord: now he was honored with the high privilege of training others for the sacred ministry. He confessed to feeling much as David did when he was to be the king's son-in-law, the difference being that no such obstacle, or anything like it, as securing one hundred foreskins of the Philistines was thrown in his way. He enjoyed his work. He was now considered worthy of being ranked among those "who shall be able to teach others also". For some of his courses he himself prepared textbooks: any one interested can find mimeographed copies of his dictations in Ethics, Symbolics, and Introduction to the New Testament in the library of Calvin College and Seminary. He retired in 1908, having reached the age limit of seventy.

The coming of Rev. G. K. Hemkes to these shores in 1877 was not without significance. Of all the ministers of his group in America, perhaps also of those in Holland, Hemkes ranked among those best educated. In family worship he often read from the Greek New Testament and did so with ease. The literary course at Kampen, it must be remembered, consisted of only three years of study, while the course offered by a gymnasium called for six years of solid application. Besides, before entering the gymnasium he had for two years been a private student of Rev. J. R. Kreulen. In point of preparation for the study of theology, therefore, Rev. Hemkes far out-distanced his fellow ministers. Had this fact been generally known, it would seem that, instead of Bavinck, Vissink, and professor Van Velzen, Hemkes might have been appointed the first professor of our Theological School. However, this may be, recognition of his ability did not lag altogether, for only a year after his arrival he was made editor of *De Wachter*, a position he creditably filled for six years and did not relinquish until his election to the professorship compelled him to do so. Why Synod of 1883, when it was bent on expansion and improvement, called Rev. A. Brummelkamp, Jr., and Rev. H. Beuker respectively, rather than Hemkes is something of a mystery. Perhaps the spirit of colonialism was as yet too strong. At any rate, in appointing Rev. Hemkes, Synod chose the most competent man available for the position and therefore did the best it could do for strengthening theological education among us.

* * *

THE FIRST IMPRESSION one would get on meeting Hemkes, the man, very likely was that he was a quiet soft-spoken person, never loud or boisterous, always serene, serene even in his intense devotion to the cause of the Boers in their struggle with Britain. Soft-spoken serenity is a virtue not too common in this country and is deserving of being cultivated. Bird lovers have vainly imported nightingales, the reason facetiously given for the failure of such attempts being that the bird could not endure the raucous voices of America. A further trait one would soon discover is that Hemkes was easy-going, a most desirable trait for those living in a nervously hurried world such as we live in, but scarcely conducive to the maintenance of high standards of scholarship for students. And what faith he had in the good intentions of his fellowmen! Himself without guile, he did not readily suspect others so that he was rather easily imposed upon and made the dupe of the evil designs of others or the victim of a practical joke.

The power of fostering true friendship also was one of the gifts with which the gentle Hemkes was endowed. He easily made friends, was loyal to them, and they were loyal to him. The intimacy between Professor Boer, his colleague, and him was one never marred by a harsh word or a provocative deed. Finally he had one peculiarity that, in the mind of many, is common among professors and is spoken of as absentmindedness. The story is told about Socrates, who, when he was a soldier, was in the habit of taking a long walk very early in the morning. After an absence of a day or two officers missed him and found him riveted, as it were, to a lonely spot because a profound idea had struck him and made him a captive of thought. There were times when Professor Hemkes was so pre-occupied with thinking that he lost consciousness of the practical demands of the moment. A fellow student writing in later years his reminiscences of student life at Kampen noted that Hemkes often precipitated the discussion of an important subject and became so engrossed in it that he forgot everything else, even hat and cane and umbrella.

Professor Hemkes was a master of one of the most fascinating of all the arts, the art of telling a story. Undoubtedly the art is as old as humanity, for, as soon as two men at the close of a busy day met at the door of a tent to recount their experiences, this art had its beginning, but, ancient though it may be, it never loses its power to charm or to beguile a weary hour. Already when he was a student he displayed his power to amuse others with a tale. Fellow students flocked around him and were all ears when Hemkes began to spin his yarns. As a professor he knew how to capitalize on this gift. Often the classroom rang with laughter as the reverend professor sought to season the subject matter under discussion with one of his humorous stories, and tension was relieved.

Hemkes was not without wit, which at times he could employ most ingeniously.

Gerrit Klaas Hemkes — Continued

It happened just before Christmas when days are shortest. A student whose Christian name was Thomas was as usual unprepared. With mischief in his eye the professor asked why the shortest day of the year is called St. Thomas day. When the student owned his ignorance, the professor remarked, "Because on that day all is so dark." Wit sometimes is haughty and caustic, but Professor Hemkes took no delight in displaying these ugly traits. Though he lived in days of controversy that was prone to be bitter and unsparing, he, as did also his colleague, Professor Boer, practised the rules of Christian courtesy and Christian kindness. He was invariably modest, entirely unpretentious.

If oratory is essential to good preaching, Professor Hemkes was not a good pulpiteer, for he had neither the voice nor the fluency of speech that characterize popular public address. He always spoke with great deliberation and never became impassioned in the pulpit. A just appraisal of his sermons, however, credits them with good thought well organized, generally interesting, and couched in a careful and neat style that had undergone the refining influence of his study of the classics. But however painstaking he was in honoring his message with a finished style, he never forgot that as a preacher he was divinely obligated to unfold the meaning of Scripture and to aim at winning souls for Christ. When he was still a young minister in his first charge, he published a series of articles under the general caption of "Experiences of a Minister," in which he set forth how sinners should be approached with the gospel, ignorant believers instructed, and weak and erring Christians corrected. His Calvinism did not keep him from warning the ungodly and from extending to them the well-meant offer of salvation. To this program Hemkes, the preacher, remained true. The last sermon he ever preached was at Allendale, the church served by his son-in-law, Rev. J. C. Schaap, and his theme was "The Fulness of Christ," a theme that was in harmony with his life long ideal of preaching a rich Christ for a poor, lost sinner.

* * *

AUTHORSHIP is one of the accomplishments generally expected of a seminary professor. Professor Hemkes in his way honored this expectation. In fact, he wrote a good deal. While he was still in his native land, he contributed many an article to *De Wekstem*, a Christian paper, published a critical estimate of the ecclesiastical strivings of a certain Rev. J. Van Dyke, and wrote a sketch entitled *Gevaarvolle Zeetocht*, meaning *A Dangerous Sea Voyage*. No sooner had he begun his academic career than he needs must defend infant baptism against attacks made upon it in a pamphlet by a Mr. J. Schoemaker. The Baptists of Grand Rapids in these days made vigorous propaganda for their views and were successful in making an impact on people so that a Dutch Baptist congregation was organized. Rev. N. H. Dosker of the Reformed Church also felt the need of defending in a small brochure the Reformed conception of baptism. It was in 1886 that Professor Hemkes published *De Kinderdoop uit God*, a booklet numbering 115 pages.

In 1892 Professor Hemkes defended the right of the Christian Reformed Church to an independent existence with the publication of his *Rechtsbestaan*. This was a work that needed to be written and did much good both here and across the ocean in enlightening people on this controversial subject. In 1913 Professor Hemkes and Rev. L. J. Hulst were joint authors of a booklet of a hundred-fifty pages having for its title *Oud en Nieuw Calvinisme — Old and New Calvinism* — in which they explained the characteristic views of the leaders of the Secession in their alleged superior scripturalness to the new views of Dr. A. Kuyper and his followers. In their foreword they tell us that, having been too busy in the years of active service, they avail themselves of the days of their emeritation to make use of such talents as still remained to them for the good of the church. Another important title was *Een Man des Volks — A Man of the People* — a biography published as a labor of love in honor of his friend and colleague, Professor G. E. Boer. Further titles to his credit are *Het Adventisme* and *Onder en Boven*. Together with his friend Jacob Noordewier, Professor Hemkes edited the the church yearbook for almost forty years. His many contributions to *De Gereformeerde Amerikaan* and *De Huisvriend* showed that he was deeply interested in providing young people with wholesome reading matter.

* * *

AMONG the items of interest dealing with more intimate relations are the fact that the professor was married three times. His first wife was Aagje Andree, who bore him nine children. She died in 1896. One of the daughters was married to Rev. R. D. Haan, and another to Rev. J. C. Schaap. The second marriage was with Marie Gezon, widow of Dr. William Van Putten of Holland, Michigan; his third the widow of Rev. H. Van Hoogen. The last four years of his life brought the professor much suffering. A broken hip caused by a fall for which a running dog was to blame and an apoplectic stroke that paralyzed his other leg and rendered his hands useless, all of which was greatly aggravated by the setting in of diabetes at the close of his life, account for the ills to which he was heir. His suffering he bore patiently. During these years of his helplessness he was graciously cared for by his grandson, Rev. George M. Ophoff, then a student. He died in the Lord, December 4, 1920, having reached the ripe old age of 82 years, 8 months, and 24 days, and by the grace of God the rest and the glory of heaven too.

* * *

The time between 1857 and 1880 was for the Christian Reformed denomination a period of beginnings and of attempts to become established. It was a period of heroic struggle in which efforts were put forth to inaugurate the various activities of denominational life such as theological education, missionary endeavor, launching of a church paper, creating funds for various purposes, and determining the attitude to be assumed toward a number of social problems. Such attempts often were feeble, resulting in failure. But with the eighties a new era dawned, characterized by rapid growth, expansion, firmer organization, and, what is more important in view of the discordant voices that had often been heard, the fostering of a spirit of unanimity and of tolerance. The forces that made for group consciousness became stronger. It is against this background that Professor Hemkes and his work must be judged. Toward the con-

olidation of the forces and trends perative in his group he wrought faithfully and nobly both as editor and as rofessor. His brochures dealing with nfant baptism and Adventism and his *Rechtsbestaan* gain in importance when nterpreted in this light.

But in spite of superior education he vas not aggressive enough to be a leader; he was not the man to arouse faith in forlorn or feeble enterprises, or to make others enthusiastic about anything new by sounding inspiring battle cries. Born and reared in the atmosphere of the Secession of 1834 in Holland, Professor Hemkes shared the theological views of the leaders in this movement and the cultural views as well in so far as these had become articulate. These were the ideals that gave satisfaction to his thinking and inspired his loyalties and activities. Even so, he labored for the coming of the Kingdom, and as a servant of the King we doubt not that he is now enjoying Kingdom blessedness as a reward of grace.

The Short-Term Pastorate

by GEORGE STOB

A GLANCE at the "Church News" page in the church papers will show that there is exceedingly brisk activity on the Preachers' Exchange. No wonder. New congregations have mushroomed in recent years. Many have been organized in Canada as a result of the vast post-war immigration into that land. Others have been organized in the United States, due mainly to population increase and spread and the rise of new residential communities in a period of great prosperity. In addition, the expansion of foreign mission fields, the increasing use of ministers in editorial, educational, and other institutional activities, and the occurrence of vacancies because of retirement and death, have made for a large "calling" potential in the Christian Reformed Church.

Preacher supply — notwithstanding large Seminary graduating classes — has not kept pace with preacher demand. The demand has been met in part by the importing of ministers from Holland, a policy some years ago vigorously discouraged, but now considered something of a necessity for the Canadian churches. For the rest there is new use of the familiar device of using over again the supply of "desirable" ministers as soon as they become technically "available." This means that after two years' service in a congregation, a minister is likely to be put again on the revolving wheel of the Preachers' Exchange. And that raises again the familiar problem of the short-term pastorate.

The Shifting Problem

THIS problem has now taken on a somewhat different aspect. Some years ago the short-term pastorate was considered in large measure responsible for the long-term pastorate. There was complaint that calls were being distributed among too few ministers — those who after only two years were eligible for another call — with the result that some ministers and congregations languished under the burden of extremely long pastorates while others enjoyed the luxury of periodic change. It was judged, therefore, that calls might be more evenly distributed if the period of *non-eligibility* for receiving a call were extended beyond two years. In 1947 Classis Kalamazoo did overture Synod to rule that vacant churches should not nominate ministers who had not served their present church *four years*, instead of two years, giving as a ground: "This would spread the calls over a greater number of ministers" (Acts 1947, p. 423). Synod was not persuaded, and rejected the overture.

The problem of long pastorates was in part relieved, however, by the rise of exceptional circumstances. Large scale immigration into Canada and an unprecedented growth in congregations have brought considerable movement of ministers, and some long pastorates have been ended. But now there is some complaint that there is too much movement, and the crux of the problem is not that too many ministers serve in their congregations for too-long but for too-short a period.

This complaint tends to rise especially from small congregations, who must usually accept a candidate minister and only too frequently give him up as soon as he or some congregation assumes he is groomed for a larger post. Small congregations think it is unfair that they should serve as apprenticing agencies, and lose their minister just when he is beginning to be seasoned to the ministerial task. They consider it quite as unfair that notwithstanding their financial weakness they should be expected to bear the frequently recurring costs of moving bills — a large burden even if they are reimbursed the one-half or one-fourth that the rules require if their minister is called within a two-or three-year period.

There is little point, I judge, in looking to the "rules" for a resolution of this problem. The church has already rejected a proposal to make four years the minimum length of a pastorate, and no doubt very wisely so. The rules governing repayment of moving expenses will not discourage the calling of short-term ministers, since the large congregations can easily and will willingly assume a slight surcharge to get the minister they want. The problem can be best resolved, and perhaps resolved *only*, by the exercise of consecrated judgment and conscience on the part of all who are involved in the calling process, within the framework of the Church Order and under the governance of accepted convictions concerning the ministry and the church.

In line with this there are at least four things which might help to establish a healthier and happier relationship between ministers and churches and within the community of churches.

Consent of the Consistory

IF A CHURCH is concerned about the injury she will suffer from losing her minister, she ought to be aware of the fact that it is within her right and power to do something to prevent that loss. Article 10 of the Church Order stipulates that "a minister, once lawfully called, may not leave the congregation with which he is connected, to accept a call elsewhere, without the consent of the Consistory."

It is quite likely that many Consistory members are not aware of this requirement, or else consider it so unrealistic and impracticable it is never taken seriously. Too often consistories think

The Short-Term Pastorate — Continued

of their relation to their minister as an employer-employee relationship. It is assumed that if a minister has the offer of a better position in another congregation, it is up to him to decide whether he wants to take advantage of it. The Consistory would not want to stand in the way of a desirable change or promotion, and so quite perfunctorily meets the letter of the law and gives routine consent to his departure.

Consistories ought to remember, however, that they did not merely "employ" their minister. As a Church of Christ and in the name of Christ they "called" him, and on his arrival he was solemnly installed in the holy office as one called by God Himself. The minister serves a congregation, therefore, in terms of a "call," and in the nature of the case the *congregation*, as well as the minister, is involved in any action which releases the minister from that call. If the congregation is persuaded that the minister's work is not done, that his services as contemplated in the call letter are still needed, let the Consistory urge upon the minister anew the call he once accepted, and in terms of which he was installed.

It is because the minister was lawfully called and solemnly installed in his holy office, that the consent of the Consistory is needed for the acceptance of another call. To be sure, no Consistory will arbitrarily wish to hold any minister against his will, nor will a Consistory want to risk violating a minister's honest conviction concerning another call. But a church does have the right, and the duty, of urging her own call upon her minister — the more so if she has particular needs which he capably serves, and if his pastorate has been short. If the church has not done that much, she has no right whatsoever to complain that her minister left too soon.

The Minister's Conscience

THE MINISTER who receives a call usually has two calls — the continuing call to the congregation which he already serves, and the call to the congregation that seeks his service. The minister of Jesus Christ will be neither unmindful of nor indifferent to the first. It is a big thing, and the shorter his pastorate has been the bigger it is.

When a minister accepts the call of a congregation he doesn't merely accept a position with all the privileges and benefits thereof. He accepts an obligation, he assumes a responsibility, he takes upon himself a task. The congregation has a right to expect a minister to take this seriously. And the minister is worthiest and happiest when he makes the complete commitment to his calling, whether to a small church at the beginning of his ministry, or to a large church at the height of his ministry. No church should be thought of as a stepping stone to a better one, nor should any pastorate be thought of as an interval of waiting for the greater opportunity. Every church ought to command the whole of the minister's consecration to the call to which he responded.

There is little need of a rule to tell a minister how long he ought to stay. His own conscience and sanctified estimate of his own work, under the Spirit's guidance, ought to tell him. Speaking quite generally, it is hard to see how a minister can discharge his obligations to his calling church, or make a reasonable contribution to the performance of his task, in the space of a mere two years. Even a three-year period seems a niggardly answer to a call to service. There is much to be said for the judgment that the average pastorate ought to be at least four or five years in length. In any event there ought to be due consideration given to the solemn obligation by which the minister is bound to the church he already serves.

A brief pastorate can be justified only by the limitations of one's ability to serve. Such limitations often beset the young minister in his first charge. The inability to draw on a reserve of experience, wisdom, *and sermons*, often makes a first charge difficult for the young minister, and imposes a psychological handicap which makes a move seem advisable both for himself and his congregation. Even so, young ministers might well be counselled not to take to the first escape hatch. The young minister, with his store of energy, initiative, and strength, can learn to make very hard adjustments. If he sticks it out and makes them, he will have gained in the kind of severe self-discipline that a minister will always need — not least in the years of his highest successes or greatest leisures.

If the measure of a minister's effective service is brief in every event, and if both he and the congregation to which he ministers are best served by very short terms, only one thing need be said. It were well for the minister if he would consider that he made a mistake in entering the ministry, and that he perhaps ought, for God's and the Church's sake, seek another vocation in life. And the Church herself might reduce such problems as these that occur in the denomination's life, by more rigidly screening those who are admitted to her ministry.

The Congregation's Conscience

THOU SHALT NOT COVET!" "Thou shalt not steal!"

The Church, which teaches those commandments, ought to be the most diligent in observing them.

It is possible that some churches violate them quite freely, and that right within the exercise of some of their most sacred duties. It is not impossible that congregations should act in a selfish and acquisitive spirit when calling a minister from another congregation.

When a congregation becomes vacant and looks toward obtaining another minister, it is quite understandable that she should hope and endeavor to obtain the best man available. It is hardly commendable, however, that she should do so without giving serious thought to the reasonable commitments of the minister she calls and to the need and circumstance of the congregation he is already serving. From all the evidences of covetous desire to have and to obtain the minister who is "thy neighbor's" it might sometimes appear that these matters are given little consideration.

The first and the big question is: Has he been in his present charge "at least two years." If so, that makes him target, if he is a particularly able and popular preacher, for a rather wild and persistent bombardment of calls. If he is a young man in a small church, his congregation, for all their happiness in God's gift of him to them, live in the constant fear that a larger and richer congregation will take their treasure. And the young man himself will be greatly confused by the impression the church at large gives him concerning ministerial service. "Does the Church mean," he might ask, "that after two years I am quite free to look around for an advantageous change, and to seize occasion to get a doubled salary, a better parsonage, and a sizeable climb up the professional ladder?"

Perhaps the young minister, with a due sense of his obligation to his congregation, or of his limitations for serving a large and affluent church, declines and declines again. That doesn't end the scramble. Still other congregations try — maybe they can offer a better salary, a better parsonage, a more desirable situation — and the attempt to draw him away from the charge to which he gave himself only a short time ago continues. It is fairly agonizing, at a time when the demands of the ministry are severe and there is need to concentrate to serve a congregation well, to be frequently distracted by calls which require "earnest and prayerful consideration" on the part of the minister and his congregation. But some young men, and so quickly, are forced to go through such critical moments too frequently. If it hurts their health, as it sometimes does, it is too bad. If it hurts their spirits — if after more than one decision following upon "earnest and prayerful consideration," churches persist and seem to suggest that a calculation of advantages is a good enough basis for deciding — it is worse.

One might say that congregations may call any minister they will, and that it is thereafter up to the persuasions of the Spirit and the minister's conscience to decide whether that is a real call from God or not. This is a kind of pietism which covers up a want of reasonable Christian charity. It will be helpful to the whole Church of Christ, and resolve some of the problems connected with the calling of ministers, if calling churches would have enough conscience to be considerate of other congregations and their ministers when they call. Let short-term ministers rest in and concentrate on the commitment to which they are already given, and do not subject them to either disturbing pressures or strong temptations. And be mindful of the needs of other congregations, not the least of congregations that are small, isolated, or beset with difficult problems. Let congregations, when they call, be mindful of some of the basic commandments respecting brotherhood.

The Counsellor's Conscience

THE COUNSELLOR, appointed by Classis to serve a calling church, is expected to do more than preside at congregational meetings, read off the ballots, and sign the call letter.

It is his calling to counsel the calling church in connection with any crucial problems that may arise during her vacancy, and also to counsel with respect to the calling of a minister. With reference to the latter, the Counsellor must with great discretion guide both the judgment and the conscience of the calling church. Furthermore, the Counsellor is appointed by the Classis to help the calling church exercise care for the interests of the church at large.

This means that the Counsellor must approve every nomination of ministers before it is presented to the congregation. The nomination must, of course, be in due observance of the church's rules governing the calling of ministers. The Counsellor ought also to be concerned that nominations are consistent with a spirit of consideration for other congregations and their ministers and the well-being of the church as a whole.

There is opportunity for a Counsellor to exert undue pressures for or against certain ministers, which wicked practice he ought carefully to shun. There is the easy temptation for the Counsellor to perform his duties quite perfunctorily, and to approve every trio made up of ministers who have served their congregation "at least two years." Needless to say, the Counsellor ought to discharge his duty carefully and conscientiously, and he ought not to approve any nomination unless it meets the spirit as well as the letter of the law.

This does not mean automatic approval of any slate of two-year men. It might mean disapproval of two- or even three-year men, if the Counsellor finds good cause. The Counsellor's power of approval is not limited to the mere application of the letter of the rules. It is a power that extends to the limit of his honest and conscientious judgments — subject always, of course, to review by Classis if appeal is made against it. Bearing this in mind, it is a question whether Counsellors ought not to guard more carefully against the nomination of short-term ministers, and refuse to give approval to either two- or three-year ministers, unless the calling Consistory shows adequate reason — perhaps the health or otherwise unusual circumstance of the minister(s) in question, or the peculiar need of the calling congregation.

The two-year rule is adequate because it is not intended to be absolute. It is intended, rather, to provide some accommodation to the unusual situation. Sometimes, though not normally, it is best for both minister and congregation if a minister is permitted to accept a call after only two years of service. The rule allows it. But the rule of "allowance" is not intended to be normative of what is generally good and acceptable. The Counsellor is expected to exercise his judgment beyond the mere letter of technical rules. Let the Counsellor be a "counsellor" indeed, and the interests of congregations, ministers, and the church at large will be better safeguarded and promoted.

THESE FOUR THINGS — the consistory's conscientious exercise of its power of consent, the minister's own faithful attention to the obligations of his calling, the congregation's charitable consideration of short-term ministers and the need of the churches they serve, and the Counsellor's careful and faithful discharge of his particular duty — these ought to secure the best interests of all concerned in matters relating to the calling of ministers. If these are observed, a minimum of rules will be wholly adequate to the situation, and there will be no need of extending the period of "non-eligibility" or otherwise more strenuously circumscribing a minister's movements.

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The Popular Book

by JOHN TIMMERMAN

WHAT MAKES a popular book? Many suppose that a dubious title on a brash and suggestive cover will insure enormous sales. The garish and tasteless displays of gunfire, mayhem, and sex which are found in almost all drug stores regardless of neighborhood or ecclesiastical association are misleading. People who thrive on such swill can find it in sections of *Life* or in television. At any rate not enough of them read books to make best sellers out of tripe. Pornography alone has made few, if any, best sellers in the United States. Popular books are usually more than one-dimensional; they sell because of varied appeal.

It is true, of course, that very, very few books are broadly popular in a really extensive sense. *Gone With the Wind*, a phenomenal best seller, has sold over four million copies to a potential public of two hundred million people. The sale of a hundred thousand copies of a novel in the United States is amazing and few ever reach it. A sale of fifteen thousand copies of a book puts it in the best seller class. Zane Grey, a fabulously popular novelist, wrote sixty-three novels by 1947, which sold to the number of nineteen million. Considering the potential market, even that figure is relatively unimpressive. Books just aren't in a class with beer, not even the thinnest and most frothy of them. The gory, so-called comic books are estimated at selling forty million monthly; they are obviously popular, but no sane man would call them books.

The popularity of a book varies with the times, of course. There are no longer many Americans who, like Samuel Sewall, read Calvin's *Institutes* while their wives are picking raspberries. *Pilgrim's Progress*, once an enormous best seller, is hardly read today, possibly because, as one of my students once put it, it deals too much with sin and living righteously. In Puritan New England sermons outsold all other types of books. Our people still buy volumes of sermons for decorative purposes, but Americans generally do not. When Samuel Sewall was courting Widow Ruggles, he gave her as a splendid present Mr. Moody's "Election Sermon." Those times are gone, yet its echoes live in the sale of the sermons and prayers of Peter Marshall. When times change, tastes change. In the latter part of the Eighteenth Century, taste became sentimental and novels became damper and damper, an uncontrolled revel of the emotions, a bath of tears. The nineteenth century liked morality and sentimentality and produced battalions of reform novels from the mawkish *Ten Nights in a Barroom* to the superb *Adam Bede*.

Some strains last. The sentimental strain has proved much tougher than the Puritan or even the reforming urges. There has been for centuries an enormous appetite for fiction as sweet as chocolate. Syrupy sentiment, synthetic sunshine, and idyllic naivete have delighted millions in the tear-jerkers of Mrs. Porter whose books have almost become a national institution, as Pollyanna as *The Reader's Digest*. The strain of adventure and exploration has been equally enduring. Mary Rowlandson's narrative of her captivity by the Indians sold furiously. The early dime novels had enough adventure to terrify Leatherstocking himself. Folksy, homespun books have attracted readers over many generations.

Some recent varieties of popular books have proved feverish money-makers. The happiness books are an example. Dale Carnegie with his booster shots for the inadequate; the *Life Begins at Forty books* (when everybody knows that is the beginning of the expanding abdomen, false teeth, grey hair or none at all); the "kid-yourself," *Be Glad You're Neurotic*, and "don't Worry" books — all sell in numbers. The creaking and the scared read the fairy tales of the pseudo-psychiatrists and go home rejoicing, sicker than ever.

Norman Vincent Peale has hit the jackpot lately and now bids the middlebrow not to fret and to be sure to shine with a clear, pure light. Dr. Peale desperately wants to be a sunbeam, and some people think he is. Today, books about doctors, who have now reached the apogee of the hero-in-white "golden-calfism," are rousingly popular; clergymen are less so; and the teachers make best sellers only when they are knifed and beaten as in the lurid *Blackboard Jungle*. Humorous books are selling, and publishers like to go *Inside Thurber*. But the really popular book today is about the Civil War. Any book about the Civil War. I am eagerly waiting the posthumous autobiography of Robert E. Lee's horse "Traveller." We have had about everything else.

The genuine best seller fills the cultural needs of a wide audience. Sometimes this audience includes intellectuals but not frequently, for the popular book and the classic rarely coincide. William Faulkner and Margaret Mitchell are both Southern novelists, but there the similarity stops. All of Faulkner's books together have not sold like *Gone With the Wind*. The intellectual novelists of our day present a criticism of our culture, the popular novelists offer an escape. That is the need they fill. Even many of the notable volumes on the Civil War are for many Americans a form of retreat into a glorious and unassailable past.

Is there a formula for best sellers? There is no *one* formula. The secret does not lie in literary art; ordinary adequacy of style or technique is ample. *The Robe* sold because of its religious appeal, its sentimental notion of brotherhood, and its vague mysticism. The historical romance when combined with love and adventure is always sure-fire. Pure adventure seldom fails. Humanitarian books from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to *The Grapes of Wrath* enjoy steady popularity. Books as diverse as *The Story of Philosophy* by W. Durand and *We* by C. Lindbergh have been best sellers.

To illustrate the impossibility of a single formula, let us run over ten of the all time best sellers in the United States. They have sold from two to eight million copies each. *Alice in Wonderland* takes us to dreamland. *One World* by Wendell Wilkie is hard-headed realism. *Ben Hur, The Last of the Mohicans*, and *Ivanhoe* are romantic historical novels. *In His Steps* is an illustrated sermon. *Tom Sawyer* and *Treasure Island* are boys' books adults enjoy. Shakespeare is on the list partly because of English teachers. *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is there too. These books do not have a great deal in common; but on greatly varying levels of literary skill, they share one trait — human appeal. They deal with people and their problems.

There is really no single formula. but if one thinks about the best sellers of the last twenty-five years, one can suggest certain promising recipes. Age cannot wither nor habit stale the custom romance. A person with moderate talent would do well to use the American past, unfurl the flag, parade the patriots, demolish the villains, and marry the hero and heroine before they set out into the golden west. An equally wide though different audience responds avidly to the religious novel in which Biblical or ecclesiastical characters are reinterpreted, humanized, and sentimentalized. Popular mental health books have a brisk sale; use your weaknesses and catapult to serenity on your failings. Spicy autobiography, racy journals, sports stories are all good possibilities.

Most popular books are middlebrow. Highbrow novelists like Joyce or Faulkner do not reach a mass market. Popular books reflect the influence of a mass culture which seldom uses books. The wonderful reprints in various editions of paperbacks are selling largely in academic centers and often in proportion to academic requirements. By and large the American reading public is not reading the best. Of the ten best sellers I previously mentioned only Shakespeare is a classic of the first magnitude; four are unimportant, and the other five minor masterpieces. Popular books are not the best, but very much better than many people think.

It is arresting, however, to notice how well religious books sell in the broad American market. The most popular book in American publishing history is *In His Steps*, a fictional sermon. Religious books satisfy a basic need of a wide segment of our public. Deeper than the materialistic surface lies the loneliness, and the fear. The important contemporary novelists offer a criticism of our times; they picture man in his miseries, but they have little or no religious faith. They feed disillusion not hope. We often talk about making an impact upon American life. Here is one place a man with gift can do it.

The Navy Chaplain

by DEWEY HOITENGA, SR.*

A Man of God Among Men

A CHAPLAIN in the United States Navy must be a man. Being a man does not depend on the few inches he towers above the coveted seventy-two. He must be every inch and every ounce a man. He will be weighed by his men and will be found wanting if they cannot say, "Our chaplain is a man." This is the chaplain's distinction.

A chaplain in the United States Navy must be a fellowman. He must be one of the fellows, a man among men. He must be human; he may not be an angel nor a demigod, not even a dignified ecclesiastic. He must share the common lot of all men. He must be a man of the world. He must be known to eat and to drink, to laugh and to weep. He must use the language of the navy, speaking about gangplanks and companionways, about decks and bulkheads. The sooner the sailors call him an "old salt" the better chaplain he will be. "To err is human" and so he must be a sinner too. This will require no drinking and swearing, no gambling with the men on the deck. There is only one thing he has to do to be a sinner along with the rest of the men — admit it. The men must know that he too is wrestling with a nature that is prone to all manner of evil. and that he daily needs the divine grace of forgiveness of sin as well as they. The chaplain is a man among men. This too is his distinction.

A chaplain in the United States Navy must be a *man of God*, and this first of all. He must be distinctly and definitely, always outstandingly a *man of God*. A man of God is a man close to God, a man who is known for his connections with God. The chaplain is a man who is close to men and close to God. You can best visualize him with a sailor in his left hand and God in his right hand, and both in his heart. And as Saul, still young enough to be a father's concern, and his servant "went to the city where the man of God was" to inquire as to their journey; so young sailors away from home will come to the Navy Chaplain, their man of God, for counsel.

The Chaplain's Contemporaries

FIVE Old Testament men stand out as men of God. They are Moses, Samuel and David, Elijah and Elisha. These are the young Chaplain's older contemporaries. Contemporaries? Are they not long dead? Yes, but they still live, live on the pages of Scripture and in the minds of men because their words were imperishable. Among these men of God the young Chaplain must take his place, though a lesser one. "Compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses" he, bearing their title, must do them honor. A chaplain in the United States Navy is in the company of these men of God, and time will fail me to tell of each of these witnesses, of Samuel who was held in honor, of David a man after God's own heart, of fearless Elijah and holy Elisha. But Moses, the first to be called a man of God may have a few moments of our time. Strikingly, it was not until Moses had completed his work that he is called a man of God; it happened while he was addressing Israel for the last time. One hundred and twenty years of communion with God and forty years of communicating Him to others to be called a man of God; It takes a lot of living close to God to be a man of God. And Moses lived on in history as a man of God. Caleb so spoke of him a few years later. The psalm he wrote is ascribed to Moses, the man of God. Centuries later, Ezra writes about Moses, the man of God.

Only once is a servant of God addressed as man of God in the New Testament. Paul calls out to Timothy: But thou, O man of God! And what content does Paul put into "man of God?" Paul, knowing the Old Testament, charges Timothy to be a Moses, a Samuel and a David, an Elijah and an Elisha. So also the true, the Christian chaplain in the navy is a man of

* The Rev. Mr. Hoitenga is minister of the Cutlerville Christian Reformed Church and a former Navy chaplain. This article is the substance of a sermon delivered on the occasion of a young chaplain's ordination.

God, a Moses, a Samuel and a David, an Elijah and an Elisha, and a Timothy too.

In the service he will be addressed in military language as Lieutenant, as Sir, Mister, or Chaplain. Sailors remembering their ministers back home will call him "Reverend" or Pastor, and his Roman Catholic friends will say Father or Padre. But no matter what they choose to call him, they will view him as a man of God, as God's representative in their midst. Even though there may be a few chaplains who have done dishonor to their title, the prejudice of the men is in the chaplain's favor. As men are incurably religious so they are inclined to regard the chaplain as a man of God — whether they are interested in God or not. To his men the devoted Chaplain will be a younger contemporary of Samuel and all the prophets.

The Chaplain's God

HIS MEN will call him a man of God, not he himself. No prophet takes this honor to himself, but God so honors him through the lips of men. And who is his God? He is the sovereign God. It is He who lays hold on the man of God. We read in the First Book of Kings "and behold there came a man of God . . . *by the word of Jehovah*." Jehovah commands, and the man of God appears. And from His command he may not waver, even to the refusing of food in a king's palace: and because he ate in a prophet's home he lost his life to a lion. God speaks: the man of God obeys.

This sovereign God is the self-disclosing God, the God who has a message for man. He reveals His secrets. He makes known His will. He unveils His purposes to the man of God who stands before the small and the great and who speaks to those who hear and to those who harden. The man of God brings men face to face with God. Even boot camp must have its Bethel. The chaplain, a man of God among men of the sea, must make the ship a gate of heaven. Mount Sinai and Mount Calvary must rise up before the eyes of those that see and those that are blind. Men will inquire of him: Is there any word from the Lord for us? He must so preach that men will repent and believe, will know and love God. He will move men to adore the sovereign God and worship Christ the Lord.

They that go down to the sea in ships,
That do business in great waters;
These see the works of Jehovah,
And His wonders in the deep.

Truly the sailor sees beautiful sunsets on the horizon when the lighter waters above meet the distilled waters below, and the nocturnal heavens declare a glory of God to the sea-faring navy not seen ashore. A storm at sea — billows tossed heavenward by their maker — is unforgettable. One can watch the phosphorescent wake of the ship for hours. These are the works of Jehovah, His wonders in the deep. It is in this setting that the chaplain tells of greater wonders of God, the beauty and the excellence of His grace. The man of God on the rolling ship tells of the God-man who came to show us the Father. He tells of the Word become flesh, of Him who knew no sin made sin on our behalf, of One who was rich and for our sakes became poor, of Christ who was dead and lived again, who left but will come again.

The minister of an established church meets before the Sunday service with a waiting and assisting consistory. He goes with the elders and deacons from the prayer room to a waiting congregation. His going into the house of God is accompanied by the petitions of understanding and sympathetic worshipers. The chaplain will have a different story to tell. When Sunday comes there will be no consistory room and no praying elder at his side. He will be in his cabin alone, alone he will pray for himself, and alone he will leave for services on the deck or in the mess hall. He will preach, not to a waiting congregation but to those he has sought during the week, invited on Saturday and compelled to come in on Sunday morning — for he must seek the lost, and gather them with the few who come eagerly.

The Chaplain's Fellowmen

AND WHO are they to whom th Old Testament men of God ministered There were those to whom they wer and others who came to them. Som honored them as men of God but a feared them as men of God. Wh came? Once it was a penniless wido threatened by her creditor; two mother came each having lost her only son The widow's oil increased; of the tw mothers we read "women received thei dead by a resurrection." Two youn men, Saul and his servant, inquirin of the man of God, were put at eas and invited to spend the night in hi home. But there were others. Thos two captains and their fifties who de fiantly shouted to Elijah, "O man o God, the king hath said, Come down" did not fare so well. Not he, but fir came down from heaven. It is folly t resist the man of God.

The Navy Chaplain is a man of Go among men, and who are they? Ther are the saved and those seeking fro afar — besides those still lost. Loya church members will come, but thos content with blessings "enjoyed" on th peripheral horizon of the church mus be sought. The chaplains will enjo noble sons of God whose fellowship i "like the dew of Hermon, that comet down upon the mountains of Zion" bu he will associate also with the viles of men, men without conscience, me grovelling in the gutter they dig o the outer rim of a sinful society.

He must minister to young men whos strength is their glory. He must sa to them: Except you be born again yo are dead men, and there is no life abid ing in you. He must counsel lonel men, men entering a new world bu with their former world in their hearts He must talk to them of mother an father, of wife and baby, but tell them that Jesus is better. He must mingl with the mighty and the learned, wit officers and University men and remin them that Christ is the Lord of host and the Light of the world. These a are the chaplain's men, his fellowmen and he never asks: Who is my neigh bor? He loves them all.

IT'S RENEWAL TIME

REFORMED JOURNAL subscriptions are on a calendar-year basis, so that subscriptions end in December and are renewable for the coming year in January. If you have not yet sent in your renewal, please do so promptly. Regular annual rate is $2.00. Special club offer of TWO subscriptions (your own and a gift) $3.00, and all additional gifts $1.50 each. Coupon on opposite page.

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Staff Letter

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A reader in Ohio writes:

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A welcome suggestion! Yes, surely, this foreign extension plan, for missionaries, teachers, schools and libraries overseas, continues. Add one or more, as many as you like, under the TWO-for-THREE plan (see coupon page 15). Just include $1.50 for each foreign subscription you wish to endow. The editors have a list of eligible names, to make a selection of names for you, and will send a card notifying the recipient of your gracious action.

~~ The Reformed Journal ~~

1951 - 1956

ONCE A YEAR we staff members allow ourselves the pleasure of a personal word to our readers.

We do this for two reasons: We want to thank those who have helped us for their support, and we want to plead for more of it.

The JOURNAL is five years old now. This birthday is a good occasion for retrospect and prospect.

We humbly thank God for giving us these years of comment and opinion on issues of moment in the life of the church and the kingdom. We have more than once remarked to each other that the Lord is blessing this undertaking.

One expression of His favor, for which we are very sensibly grateful, is the continued substantial cooperation of our publishers, the Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

Another token of God's blessing upon our little paper is the annually renewed subscriptions of our readers. As we said last year, we are too small to put somebody on the road drumming up business. And yet most of you come back each year, without advertisement and without fanfare, promptly, and sometimes with several names besides your own.

We are pleased by the quality and constancy of our readers but are not yet gratified by the number of them. It is our impression that you not only get the JOURNAL but also read it. That is what we mean by your quality. And it is just this vitality of interest that makes it a pleasure for us and for our contributors to write.

It was Walt Whitman who said that to have great poets there must be great audiences too. We know for a fact that the relationship between writer and reader is just a intimately organic as that. Thanks to you all, we fee that we are not writing in a vacuum. We believe that w have found an audience.

That audience, then, is fit but few. We are holding ou own, and perhaps even gaining a little, but we have neve had three thousand readers. We should like that man this year. You could all so easily put us over the top o that goal by sending in two instead of one. If you canno think of a suitable subscriber, let us choose him for you

We never intended to be universally popular. We hav only ideas to offer, and ideas are not popular. But we ar looking for a few thousand people, a few thousand among the tens of thousands of Reformed people, who car enough about thoughtful discussion to read the JOURNAL May we count on you to help us find them?

Some years back the success of the most popular o American monthly magazines was described as owing t its simplism, dogmatism, and optimism. Certainly ther is something in the spirit of the time which tries to ge things down to a rule of thumb and then to propagandiz them.

The JOURNAL exists to counteract this spirit. Confiden of our cause, we invite your prompt renewal. We do no even like to send out dunning notices in January becaus our December announcements are neglected. And thi year we add a special plea: if you possibly can, try t make it two instead of one.

That would be very encouraging not only to the five o us who edit but also to the fifty of us who write. Ma God bless you all in the new year.

—THE STAFF

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